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ABSTRACT

In this activity, one in a set of teacher-developed materials for elementary geography, students investigate the selection of recreational sites in urban areas. Given characteristics of four areas of a fictitious city called Urbo, students are asked to recommend sites for public recreational facilities. The personal and social values of the students enter into the decisions. Value decisions and the concept of majority rule are emphasized in the exercises. The unit provides questions about Urbo as a case study, it is suggested that students examine their local community. See SO 009 140 for a general description and explanation of the elementary and secondary sets comprising this series. (ND)

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INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES SERIES IA/E-7

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NO PLACE TO PLAY: VALUING DILEMMAS IN THE CHOICE OF RECREATIONAL SITES

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As the population continues to expand, the location of recreational areas for the public has taken on increasing importance. How can children be made aware that every public recreational decision involves a value choice, often to the detriment of the minority's rights. How can children be led to analyze the adequacy, equity and efficiency of public decisions and the value priorities reflected in them? What does a teacher do to sensitize youngsters to the interplay of political, social, economic, spatial, and even historical factors involved in public recreational decisions? Case studies and problem exercises are used, along with role-playing activities, to involve students in these questions.

In addition to the case study and teacher-related materials provided in this section, the following items will be used in the session: transparencies, tape recordings, sample student-generated solutions, and local area statistical data.

SO 009 145

Case Study

The Problem Exercise (To be given to the students)

Urbo is a city that has doubled in population in recent years. The fine parks, playgrounds and public recreational areas that were once the pride of all its citizens, no longer can hold all of the people who wish to use them. And all ages of people now have more free time than ever for recreation. The residents all over the city are complaining that there are not enough open public areas for sports, play, picnicking, or other recreational activities, and they wish to take some action. Everyone agrees that more public recreational areas are needed, but no one is sure where they should be located or what kinds of materials and activities they should have.

Urbo covers a region of approximately 150 square miles, and, like most cities, is made up of a variety of different types of people with

different recreational needs. In general, however, you may consider most of the people in Urbo as living in four different areas of the city, and as having the characteristics listed below.

NORTHSIDERS

Resident Income:	Very high, well above average
Property Costs:	Very high
Industries:	None
Stores:	Few
Major Traffic Arteries:	Very few
People Per Square Mile:	Very few
Type of Inhabitants:	Mostly families with children; very few single adults

SOUTHSIDERS

Resident Income:	Average
Property Costs:	Average
Industries:	None
Stores:	Few
Major Traffic Arteries:	Very few
People Per Square Mile:	Few
Type of Inhabitants:	Mostly older families whose children have already left home; only a few single adults

EASTSIDERS

Resident Income:	Less than average
Property Costs:	Low
Industries:	Many
Stores:	Many
Major Traffic Arteries:	Many
People Per Square Mile:	Very many
Type of Inhabitants:	Mostly families with children; also many single adults.

WESTSIDERS

Resident Income:	Average
Property Costs:	Average
Industries:	Few
Stores:	Many
Major Traffic Arteries:	Average number
People Per Square Mile:	Average number
Type of Inhabitants:	Mostly middle-aged families with few children left at home; only a few single adults

Your task. You are to make recommendations for additional public recreational plans with sites, materials and activities to serve all of the people from the four areas of Urbo. Any recommendations that

you make must be approved in an election by a majority of all of the voters of Urbo. It is important to remember that there are no more open spaces in Urbo, so that any new recreational areas that you recommend will require the removal of some citizens' homes or stores. (Inclusion of this last sentence is optional.)

Procedures (For the teacher)

The information provided may be modified to alter the variables, thus generating a more or less difficult problem exercise. Data might be added, for example, on the scope and extent of existing recreational facilities, racial concentrations, security, and the like. The planning task may be handled by the class as a whole or in groups, representing the various areas of Urbo. The teacher may wish to choose a mayor and a city council with representative from the four areas to screen all proposals. In any event, some provision must be made to give proportional voting power to areas on the basis of implied population size.

In graphically illustrating Urbo, a very basic drawing may be used (see transparency) particularly with a young or inexperienced class. On the other hand, the use of scale, traffic artery configurations, and the like may be encouraged with certain groups.

Subsequent discussions of the exercise and its relationship to reality should underscore the fact that the election consensus does not necessarily certify that a prudent and equitable planning recommendation has been made. Analysis of alternative solutions proposed and their potential consequences, along with the valuing dimensions reflected in students' rationale, should receive the most emphasis in the exercise and subsequent discussions. The political expression of the majority's will, as reflected in an election, may be viewed as just one type of variable to be considered in planning concerns.

Follow-Up Activities (For the teacher)

Once students have been involved in planning where variables have been controlled, students may be given recreational concerns in their own community. Field experiences could be used to better acquaint students with existing facilities and with the feasibility of proposed solutions. Also, community and student attitudes on recreational issues could be sampled through simple interview-questionnaire techniques.

Using a map of their local area as a starting point, the students might be asked to deal with questions similar to the following ones.

Where are the public recreational facilities in our community located?

Are these facilities easy for all groups within the community to get to? If not, who suffers the most? Why do you suppose the facilities have been located where they are?

Ideally, what should recreational facilities in our community be like, and where should they be located?

Who would be affected and in what ways by the recommendations that we have made? What groups might support and what groups might oppose our recommendations and why?

What do our recreational recommendations and the existing recreational conditions in our community tell us about what we think is important and what we are willing to sacrifice for it?

Statement on Use of Materials

In assisting students to identify accurately recreational concerns from a geographic perspective and to analyze related valuing concerns, the teacher may wish to follow this sequence of general procedures.

1. Ask the class to illustrate with a basic graphic sketch the characteristics of Urbo from the basic information given. Once the class reaches some consensus on which single sketch best represents the region, it should be used as the common reference point for the class.

2. Have the class determine what sort of recreational facilities should be provided, along with their rationale.

3. Have the class determine where the recreational facilities should be located with some rationale (include alternative locations).

4. Ask the class to hypothesize what changes or consequences are likely to occur, or who will be affected the most and in what ways, if the recommendations offered are translated to action.

5. Provide the class with some decision-making mechanism to resolve conflicting views.

6. Discuss the exercise and its applicability to reality.

7. Replicate the exercise using data and problems from the local community.

One form of decision-making is for each group, representing the four areas of Urbo, to offer competing recommendations and rationale, and to answer questions. After discussion and generation of any compromise recommendations, all the class could vote on proposals with majority approval required for adoptions.